



Union for the Mediterranean
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الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط

UfM Regional Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy

High-Level Panel – 30 November 2017

09:00 -10:45

Intervention by Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi

Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean

(Moderator) Secretary General, I note that the UfM Roadmap indicates human development and sustainable development as main axes of work for the UfM; how do you see Blue economy contributing to meeting these wider regional objectives?

Thank you Mr. Chairman for this excellent question.

Dear Commissioner,

Dear Ministers,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Allow me at the very outset before answering the question, to express how delighted I am to be here in Italy, in the city of Naples on the occasion of the **first Union for The Mediterranean Stakeholder Conference on The Blue Economy**.
- **Italy's firm support and active engagement in UfM activities remains central, and I would like to express our warmest appreciation to tis Government, and more particularly to Regione Campania, for hosting this important Conference**

today. I would like to pay tribute to the fantastic work the region has been carrying over the last years for the promotion of Blue Economy in the Mediterranean, and more broadly for the preservation of our common Sea and its unique environment.

I would also like to extend our deepest appreciation for the active leadership of our Co-Presidency, assumed by the European Union and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well as for the continuous support of the Swedish Government in the organisation of this Conference.

- This Conference is yet another illustration of the invaluable work of all our Member-States and key partners to enhance regional cooperation efforts to

tackle the common and pressing challenges we are all facing in the Mediterranean region, particularly related to Environment and Climate change.

- I am very happy to see such an important mobilization and participation of a **wide number of key stakeholders in the field of Blue Economy for the first time in the framework of the UfM**: International organisations and governments, universities and university networks, research centres, think tanks, and the private sector.
- This conference comes indeed in a very appropriate moment in order to advance our work in facing the environmental threats and challenges in the Mediterranean region, building on the commitments of the **UfM Ministerial**

Conference on Blue Economy held in Brussels, in November 2015, and more recently – as pertinently mentioned by you dear Chairman, the new UfM Roadmap for Action, adopted by the 43 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UfM last January, at the II UfM Regional Forum held in Barcelona.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Indeed, the UfM Road Map approved by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 43 UfM countries last January 2017 provides the UfM with a mandate to strengthen the security-development nexus in order to create the appropriate environment conducive to social economic development and to address in a comprehensive and balanced manner the challenges of the region. The component of reinforcing

human capital is thus a key issue to achieve these objectives. That is why we are challenged continuously to focus on human development, in particular on youth. Already, at UfM Ministerial meeting on Blue economy held in Brussels on 17 November 2015, Ministers recognized the potential of the Blue economy to promote growth, jobs and investments and reduce poverty, and the Declaration links environmental protection with development “.... *recognising that clean and healthy seas are drivers and enablers for national and regional economies....*”

- In this respect, it is useful to recall that Mediterranean countries are experiencing rapid growth in their working age populations. Almost 60% of the regional population is today under the age of 30 and the number of young people under the age of 15 is forecasted to increase by over 18% by 2020. 2.8 million young people enter the labor market each year in the region. With an average of

about 30% youth unemployment and around 50% for young women, the region has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. It is estimated that the region's Gross Domestic Product could increase by US\$25 billion by 2018 if the youth unemployment rate were to be reduced by half.

- Efforts to promote the Blue economy are part of the answer to this challenge. Recent studies suggest that the economic assets of the Mediterranean Sea could be valued at over USD 5.6 trillion, and the maritime and marine related activities in the Mediterranean Sea generates an annual economic value which is comparable to the larger economies in our region (WWF source). These gross figures highlight the huge importance that the Blue economy, understood as “the set of human activities depending on the sea and/or underpinned by land-

sea interactions in the context of sustainable development” already represents for our region.

- In fact, if we look more closely, the huge potential for the Mediterranean region is even more clear, in particular in certain sectors:
 - For instance, in 2015, the direct contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Mediterranean countries was 4.5% of the regional GDP, and it is estimated that of the 850 million tourists that travel to or within Mediterranean countries, about 40% visit the Mediterranean coastal areas.

This is a huge influx, bringing revenues and employment throughout our countries, but is also a very big burden for our environment. A Blue economy approach can contribute to preserving the local identity and physical appearance of coastal cities, preserve landscapes and biodiversity, decrease water and air pollution as well as the pressure on natural resources. Moreover, it would generate additional economic benefits that would be more evenly distributed to the local economy, and create additional, better paid jobs.

- With a current value of over EUR 4.1 billion and 353.000 direct jobs, the fisheries and aquaculture industry in the Mediterranean Sea is among the most promising BE sectors in terms on growth and employability. Just note the expansion of the aquaculture sector, which provided only 7% of fish

for human consumption in 1974. Today this share had increased to more than 50 %.

To harness this potential, and reverse the trend of declining employment in the fisheries sector, employment opportunities, however, can no longer be limited to fishery activities in the strict sense of the term, but have to be part of a far-reaching diversification and reconversion of the fishery sector. This can be achieved through starting up multifunctional activities such as fishing tourism, ichthyo-tourism, management of environmental services by fishermen and alternative forms of valorisation of the sector also through tourism and socio-educational activities

- Although little developed yet, offshore wind energy could increase in production to 12 GW by 2030 and close to 40 GW by 2050 for Mediterranean EU countries. Wind energy potential is especially large in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, where it is estimated at 21,967 TWh/year, 34 times more than the northern countries.
- I would like to conclude, referring to the fact that numerous initiatives applying Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) principles and practices to Blue Economy sectors are emerging across the Mediterranean. While their scope and size might vary from young start-ups and grass root initiatives to large-scale industrial SCP strategies, the common aim is to accelerate economic, social and environmental progress.

- The UfM Regional Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy in Naples is the occasion to build on this potential and gather around stakeholders from the whole region to exchange views and experiences with the ultimate objective of setting in motion a Mediterranean blue economy community.